



HR1661

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are deeply saddened to learn of the death of our friend and colleague, State Representative Wyvetter H. Younge of East St. Louis, who passed away on December 26, 2008; and

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WHEREAS, Wyvetter Younge was born in St. Louis, Missouri on August 23, 1930; she was a lifelong resident of East St. Louis and one of the longest serving, dedicated, and passionate legislators in history of the Illinois House of Representatives; she was first elected to the House in 1974 and served until her death; and

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WHEREAS, She built a strong reputation for working hard to provide members of her community with better schools and educational opportunities, affordable housing, and access to health care; she also was a zealous advocate for revitalizing her district through economic development and the creation of new job opportunities; and

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WHEREAS, She became well-known for her responsive constituent service office and her intense focus on issues affecting the quality of life for district residents; she was so committed to serving her constituents, raising her family,

1 and caring for her late husband when he became seriously ill,
2 that she drove 90 miles each way to Springfield every day that
3 the House was in session so that she could return to her
4 community and help those in need; and

5 WHEREAS, She believed that education was the key to
6 breaking the cycle of poverty and that every child deserves a
7 quality education regardless of family income; a cornerstone of
8 her work was her fight for better educational opportunities for
9 the State's children; among the education initiatives she
10 supported was the recalculation of the school funding formula
11 to increase funding for Illinois' downstate schools; she fought
12 valiantly to establish the East St. Louis Community College
13 Center in East St. Louis; she was a visionary who initiated the
14 concept of the East St. Louis Action Research Project as a
15 means of providing tangible resources from the University of
16 Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to East St. Louis and the
17 surrounding communities; because of her commitment to
18 providing better opportunities for future generations,
19 Wyvetter Younge Middle School in East St. Louis was named in
20 her honor; and

21 WHEREAS, She fought for health care access for all because
22 she knew in her heart that being healthy was not only for the
23 privileged, but a basic right; an advocate for working families
24 and senior citizens, she supported legislation requiring HMO

1 reform and health care coverage for children and low-income
2 working families; she co-sponsored legislation to reduce the
3 cost of prescription drugs, expanded home-based elder care
4 programs, and broadened the State's family and medical leave
5 laws; and

6 WHEREAS, She was a living witness to the civil rights
7 movement and a fighter for equality; she provided assistance to
8 the NAACP in its efforts to ensure that minority workers were
9 employed on the Martin Luther King Bridge rebuilding project;
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11 WHEREAS, She made urban revitalization and rebuilding
12 inner-city economies among her top priorities; she fought for
13 better paying jobs, because she understood that good jobs help
14 build strong communities and healthy families; she ardently
15 sought funding for a variety of redevelopment projects across
16 her district, including the expansion of the Katherine Dunham
17 Centers for Arts and Humanities in East St. Louis; and

18 WHEREAS, She was a tireless supporter of the East St. Louis
19 Business Incubator, industrial parks, and other job-creating
20 efforts; she drafted job-producing legislation like the
21 "Economic Bill of Rights" to seek alternatives to welfare
22 dependency and to increase the State's power to provide
23 economic justice; she backed measures to increase the minimum

1 wage and make child care more affordable; and

2 WHEREAS, She passed a bill that paved the way for the
3 development of the Metro East Citizens Land Cooperative, a
4 citizen-owned, for-profit community investment corporation
5 intent on connecting Illinois residents with land and
6 technology through ownership; she helped the cooperative to
7 revive and expand an East St. Louis renaissance plan developed
8 in the 1970s by famed architect R. Buckminster Fuller; and

9 WHEREAS, She worked tirelessly to combat poverty, to care
10 for the sick and the homeless, and to help those battling
11 addiction problems because she felt our society is judged by
12 how we treat our least fortunate; and

13 WHEREAS, She was not only focused on finding big solutions
14 to big problems, but also dedicated to helping every individual
15 constituent in need, oftentimes giving constituents cash from
16 her wallet to pay their utility bills; and

17 WHEREAS, Her efforts on behalf of the State of Illinois
18 have garnered recognition from a wide array of organizations,
19 including the Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville School
20 of Nursing, United Auto Workers, Katherine Dunham Centers,
21 Illinois Agricultural Association, American Council Society,
22 NAACP, East St. Louis School District 189, and Gamma Phi Delta;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, She graduated from Lincoln Senior High School in
3 East St. Louis; she studied at Hampton Institute in Virginia,
4 where she received her Bachelor of Science degree in 1951; she
5 furthered her education by earning a law degree in 1953 from
6 St. Louis University School of Law and later a Master of Law
7 degree from Washington University School of Law in 1972; and

8 WHEREAS, From 1955 to 1957, she served as an assistant
9 circuit attorney in St. Louis; and

10 WHEREAS, She was affiliated with the Missouri Bar
11 Association and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority; and

12 WHEREAS, During her historic tenure in the House, she was
13 named Assistant House Democratic Leader in 1995 and Assistant
14 Majority Leader in 2005, and served as one of the most
15 respected and effective legislators in State history; and

16 WHEREAS, She was a beloved community leader; the residents
17 of East St. Louis and other surrounding Metro East communities
18 as well as all the people of Illinois have benefitted immensely
19 from her unquestioned professionalism, enormous integrity,
20 deep principles, compassionate advocacy, and untiring work
21 ethic; and

1 WHEREAS, She was preceded in death by her husband of 49
2 years, Richard Younge, Sr.; her daughter, Ruth Younge; and her
3 sister, Cecile Edwards; and

4 WHEREAS, Representative Younge is survived by her
5 daughter, Margaret Hewitt of East St. Louis; her son, Torque
6 Younge of East St. Louis; her two stepsons, Richard Younge, Jr.
7 of Lithonia, Georgia, and Roland Younge of St. Louis, Missouri;
8 her sister, Ruth H. Hill of O'Fallon, Illinois; her two
9 brothers, Roscoe Hoover of St. Louis, Missouri and Herbert
10 Hoover of Lutz, Florida; her eight grandchildren; and her many
11 friends and constituents; therefore, be it

12 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
13 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
14 mourn, along with her friends, family, and constituents, the
15 passing of a truly caring individual and monumental presence in
16 her community, State Representative Wyvetter H. Younge; and be
17 it further

18 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
19 presented to the family of State Representative Wyvetter Younge
20 as a symbol of our sincere sympathy and sorrow for their loss.